

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



Regional Transportation Advisory Council

October 12, 2016, Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4,
Boston, MA

Meeting Summary

Introductions

T. Bennett, Chair (Cambridge) called the meeting to order at 3:10 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 6)

Smart Parking: Using Technology to Improve Access to Transit -Sarah Kurpiel Lee, MAPC; Jason Schrieber, Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates; Bruno Lopes, MBTA

T. Bennett introduced members of the speaking panel on Smart Parking.

J. Schrieber described the evolution of parking in congested inner core locations as well as more suburban transit stations. In Salem, MA, a parking garage was developed which is rarely more than 50 percent filled as many transit riders connect to the Commuter Rail service by walking, bus or kiss-and-ride. A similar garage was constructed in Beverly with similar use patterns. Changing strategies to charge more for on-street parking and less for garages has helped fill garages and ensured that high-turnover customer spaces fit business needs better. Curb space is much more valuable for businesses that are always in need of higher turn-over of parking for customers.

Parking meter rates in Boston, and the rest of the region are extremely low. In addition, requiring off-street parking in housing markets drives up housing costs when there is sufficient on-street parking available. Planners have recognized that people cannot engage with a city if you are not willing to get out of your car.

The decision to build more parking must consider impacts on the community such as

the cost of finance and construction, congestion due to induced demand, and impacts on transit use. J. Schrieber identified several cities that are dealing with effective parking pricing programs including complementary priced transit passes for commuters to the central city. Improving transit and biking facilities have transformed many urban.

Wayfinding and the simplifying of information are important for developing smart parking. Clear and visually attractive messages make parking easy to use. Strict regulation of building and use of space for parking helps some communities align parking with specific parking and transit objectives like making parking available for public use.

S. Kurpiel Lee addressed the parking management tools available to Massachusetts communities. MAPC calls it “right-size parking” for housing developments. Too much parking is as bad as too little parking. Zoning laws can end up overproducing parking spaces at the expense of housing. MAPC has promoted planning policies in several communities that properly gauge the need for parking. In a recent residential parking survey of five suburban towns, 124 multi-family residential developments were assessed. Data and background statistics included counting parking spaces between 12 AM and 4 AM. The compiled statistics of the study showed strong correlations between job accessibility and transit access, as well as parking supply and parking utilization per unit (if multiple parking spaces were supplied, people would use them).

The range of parking utilization in the study locations ranged from 67 percent use to 80 percent use. Overall, 75 percent of the spaces were used, meaning that one-in-four spaces were not being used. These results were in approximate conformity with other surveys conducted nationally.

One thousand spaces in this study were not being used, which translates into \$10M in construction costs and enough land space to build another 340 residential units.

Implementation of parking benefit districts is a new strategy which allows communities to generate revenue from the business or residential districts and reinvest the money in that same district. By employing parking benefit districts, communities can leverage their parking management strategies as a means of economic development.

Organizations like Main Streets can manage these districts and the revenue can fund a variety of localized projects including modern meters, transit access projects, beautification and access-oriented improvements. MAPC has a regional action procurement program which realizes up to 40 percent savings when communities buy through this system.

The Legacy Place housing development near Dedham Corporate Center commuter rail station is a transit-oriented development project undertaken with Dedham. MAPC helped town officials plan for improved access to environmental amenities and better parking layout which made for better access to pedestrian routes throughout the

neighborhood development.

B. Lopes discussed the current status of the MBTA parking system and how technology is helping to meet parking demands. There are 140 parking facilities throughout the state. It is difficult to increase ridership without developing parking facilities. The MBTA is considering a relationship with a performance-based parking vendor. A key consideration will be to understand the relationship between parking supply and user demand. Dynamic pricing will be used to distribute parking throughout the system. Payment and enforcement process at the Commuter Rail Division is already technologically advanced.

In 2010, a pay-by-phone application was implemented. This has been a widely used and efficient system. Development of this technology has improved customer experience and also improved the agency's ability to gain information on parking users which helps to understand the demand throughout the region.

Pricing of commuter rail service and rapid transit parking facilities produces some rider characteristics that skew the service distribution. Outer suburban commuters often drive to transit hubs which offer cheaper parking, thereby increasing demand at these locations even though outer suburban stations have substantial parking available.

DISCUSSION

T. Bennett asked the panel if any commuter rail station parking utilization studies might be considered for future UPWP studies. S. Kurpiel Lee said currently parking management plans, a TOD parking study and 'Right-Sized Parking' studies have been undertaken as UPWP projects. J. Schrieber explained that the availability of data is the most important aspect of developing parking projects of this nature, especially studies in downtown parking areas. The type of data collected and knowing generally what people's preferences and attitudes are is most important in determining community level needs.

M. Gowing asked about 'First Mile / Last Mile' transit connections especially in more non-urban and ex-urban areas. J. Schrieber indicated that the opportunities of shared transportation in the external hubs is currently a major trend in his work. Walkable connections are an important part of the 'last mile' connection as well as shared transportation. Local universities are encouraging ride sharing (Uber, Lyft) at remote stations beyond walking and biking distances.

T. Bennett noted the disparity in data needs and data availability, particularly with ride sharing and Transportation Network Companies and asked the panel for elaboration on this condition. J. Schrieber stated that the industry is changing very fast and finds that companies are becoming more willing to share data.

J. McQueen commented on the congestion and parking issues noted in the nationwide

survey mentioned, particularly in Chicago. J. Schrieber stated that both Boston and Chicago have emphasized multi-modal transportation in the recent past, especially regarding bicycling.

M. Wellons noted that mode shift is the larger environmental issue; she noted a lack of trees and landscaping in a parking development. She stated that landscaping is an important part of parking policy. J. Schrieber stated that consideration must be made for the trade-off between reductions in GHG – as result of mode shift to bicycling when compared to carbon consumption loss as a result of vegetation reduction mentioned in some parking and bicycling projects.

O. MacDonald asked B. Lopes about parking management change and enhancing revenue and the fare structure of the commuter rail. He noted that downstream commuter rail users are filling up parking lots closer to transit. B. Lopes indicated that expanded station utilization in East Weymouth is a function of both high demand and the complementary role of commuter boat service availability. J. Schrieber explained that there is a good balance between commuter rail fare and parking pricing. He stated that managing feeder service, or last mile service could increase commuter rail ridership. B. Lopes stated that station access is a major contributor to ridership growth.

C. Porter asked if market-based, on-street residential permit pricing is used anywhere. J. Schrieber stated that the closest to doing this is San Francisco which has imposed an annual fee in downtown districts.

M. Gowing asked about dynamic pricing noting a need for coordinating pricing along the entire route of transit and commuter rail. S. Lee and J. Schrieber addressed concerns related to regional pricing. B. Lopes explained that unified parking pricing within a zone and personal travel information availability through technological advances at the MBTA has improved the prospects of finding available parking spaces along a commuter rail corridor. When cities and towns control their own parking without regard to the regional needs, it hampers the rational use of parking along a rail corridor. An optimal solution is to have one integrated parking information and payment system for the station's region.

Minutes - September 14, 2016

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 14 meeting was made and seconded. The minutes were approved with corrections noted.

Election Committee - M. Gowing, Chair

Election of Officers is to be held today. M. Gowing explained that nominees for Chair and Vice Chair were made at the September meeting. The term of office is November 1, 2016, through October 31, 2017. Background information on both candidates was

made available prior to the meeting.

T. Bennett was elected Chair. M. Gowing was elected Vice Chair.

Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

There were no announcements.

Chair's Report - T. Bennett Chair

T. Bennett updated members on MPO activities. The MPO sent a comment letter to MassDOT regarding local contributions to funding highway projects. The MPO members did not support requiring communities to contribute additional funds to projects primarily because they lack many of the tools to raise special funds that may be available elsewhere.

The Financial Management and Control Board received an update on the Green Line Extension project. The City of Cambridge has approved the \$25M contribution to the GLX project. Approval by the City of Somerville is underway.

A CTPS annual report was provided to the MPO. T. Bennett summarized that the staff had accomplished a lot, especially considering the number of recent staff transitions at CTPS with six positions being opened due to retirements.

CTPS is conducting modeling updates on freight and the South Coast Rail project.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Attendance

Municipalities (Voting)

Acton
Cambridge
Millis
Needham
Weymouth

Citizen Groups

American Council of Engineering Companies
MassBike
MASCO
Riverside Neighborhood Association
WalkBoston

Guests

Sarah Kurpiel Lee
Jason Schrieber
Bruno Lopes
D. Damaris
Ed Lowney

Staff

Matt Archer

Attendee

Mike Gowing
Tegin Bennett
Ed Chisholm
Rhain Hoyland
Owen MacDonald

Fred Moseley
Chris Porter
Paul Nelson
Marilyn Wellons
John McQueen

MAPC
Nelson\Nygaard
MBTA
Boston Resident
Malden Resident

David Fargen